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May history book club focusing on stars

PIERRE, S.D. -- The night sky has fascinated people throughout the ages.

Those attending the May meeting of the History and Heritage Book Club will learn how to make the stars their old friends. The meeting features a trip inside a planetarium and learning how some of the constellations received their names. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, May 8, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. Everyone is welcome to attend.

“Those of us who live in South Dakota are treated to the greatest show out of this world every night. We want people to be excited about looking into the night sky and making sense of it,” said Patricia Miller, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation. The foundation is the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society and, along with the SDSHS Press, sponsors the History and Heritage Book Club.

The book club selection for the month is *Dakota Starwatch* by Mike Lynch, a book specific to stargazing in North and South Dakota. The book features 12 star maps – one for each month of the year – that are set for skies across the Dakotas. People can take the book outside, flip the pages to the correct star map for the month, look up at the sky and have in their hands the perfect map of the night sky.

The book also tells the legends and mythology of the constellations, and explains the hows and whys of the changing night sky.

Vennie Heibel will conduct a tour of the night sky using a portable planetarium from the South Dakota Discovery Center & Aquarium in Pierre. The planetarium will be set up in the lobby of the Cultural Heritage Center. People will be able to walk into the planetarium and will then sit on the floor, or on a chair if necessary, to watch the star show inside the dome of the planetarium.

Heibel will explain how to locate major stars in the spring sky and tell some of the stories behind the stars and constellations. Constellation stories vary by culture, and Heibel will base his constellation lore on classic Greek and Roman mythology. Heibel is a retired middle school science teacher who conducts astronomy classes for the Discovery Center.

Dakota Starwatch is available at the Heritage Stores at the Cultural Heritage Center and the Capitol. A 10-percent discount is given to book club members, and an additional 5-percent discount is given to SDSHS members when they purchase the book at either Heritage Store.

For more information, call (605) 773-6006.

Editor's Note: The cover of the book *Dakota Starwatch* is attached.

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The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation is a private charitable nonprofit that seeks funding to assist the South Dakota State Historical Society in programming and projects to preserve South Dakota's history and heritage for future generations.

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.